

24. Listening



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

1 Samuel 3

God speaks to Samuel



AIMS

To help the children understand some of the ways God speaks to us, especially through the Bible

To encourage them to be open to listen to what he is saying

God speaks - he spoke to Samuel and he speaks to us today. As we get to know him, we can learn to listen and to hear his voice.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read through the Bible passages for this session and reflect:

- When have you heard God speak to you? (If you can think of an example of God speaking to you through the Bible, that will be helpful for the session.)
- How can we learn to listen and to recognise God's voice?

Take some time to pray for your group.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one of the following activities to introduce today's theme:

▶ Pass the Message Game

Have the children sitting in a circle. Choose one person to start the game by coming up with a short message – just one sentence. They whisper it into the ear of the person on their left, then that person whispers it to the person on their left, and the message travels round the whole circle. Each person is only allowed to whisper the message once so if the person receiving the message is not sure what was said, encourage

them to do their best to pass on what they heard even if it sounds strange. When the message reaches the last person, get them to say it out loud and compare it with the original message. You can then choose another person to start again with a new message.

▶ Sound Clip Quiz

You will need: equipment to play sound or video

Run a quiz which involves the children listening and identifying particular sounds. There are several of these ready-made on YouTube, for example:

▶ Guess The Sound Game

youtu.be/IzsssS_I_2Y

A list of answers is provided at the end of the video.

(continued overleaf)

You may want to make a note of these and just use part of the quiz with the children as there are 22 sounds. You could play the video, pausing after each sound to get them to give their answers, or you could get them to write down the answers and go through them at the end.

▶ Guess The Disney Song

youtu.be/2ChrRWq7fmQ

In this quiz, the answers come up on the screen after the song has played for ten seconds, so you may want to pause it after each song to allow the children to give their answers.

▶ Guess The Movie Theme

youtu.be/PeFrfunDnqc

In this quiz, the answers come up on the screen after the music has played for fifteen seconds, so you may want to pause it after each piece to allow the children to give their answers.

Alternatively you could create your own quiz by making a playlist of songs and playing the children a few seconds of each one.

▶ Hum That Tune

Choose one person to start and get them to hum a tune without saying what it is. It could be a nursery rhyme/ a TV theme/ a pop song... any tune that is likely to be familiar to others.

See how quickly the rest of the group are able to guess the tune and allow the person who guessed first to hum the next tune.

If you have a larger group, you could divide the children into teams and give each team a time limit (one or two minutes) to see how many tunes they can identify.

▶ Sword Drill

You will need: a Bible for each child (ideally multiple copies of the same version)

This activity is only suitable for groups who are used to looking up the Bible.

Give each child a Bible, then call, "Sheath swords," which means they put the Bible under their arm. Call, "Draw swords!" which means they hold their Bible in the air. Tell them the reference of the verse you want them to find and get them to repeat it back to you. Shout, "Charge!" which means the children should try to look up the verse as quickly as possible.

Get them to stand up when they have found it so that you can see who is first, and then get them to read the verse to the group.

(Remember to make sure they are happy to read and, if not, let someone else volunteer to do it.)

Some verses you could use, which would connect with today's theme are:

John 10:27, 2 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 1:1-2, Psalm 19:1-2

Another game that would fit with this session is the Guess The Voice Game from Session 12 of One Big Story.



EXPLORING THE BIBLE

▶ Recap

Remind the children that they have been learning about a time when the Israelites were living in the Promised Land but were struggling to obey God.

They were being led by people called the Judges. We have thought about two of those judges - Gideon and Samson.

There were lots more judges and we don't have time to think about all of them, but we are going to think today about Israel's final judge who was called Samuel. The story we are going to think about takes place before he became a judge - when he was a young child.

▶ Samuel's Story

You will need: simple costumes for Samuel and Eli (for example, a headdress or robe; if you have a white wig or beard, you could use this for Eli)

Samuel's mum was a lady called Hannah. For a long time she and her husband weren't able to have any children. Hannah really wanted to have a child so she prayed to God about it. She prayed and prayed and prayed some more, and she promised God that if she had a child, she would dedicate the child to God and that they would serve God.

Finally her prayer was answered and she had a son whom she called Samuel. When Samuel was old enough she took him to the Tabernacle, the place where the people went to worship God, and Samuel stayed there with Eli, the priest, helping him with his duties. One night something really exciting happened to Samuel.

(Choose children to be Samuel and Eli and give them their costumes. Get them to act out the story as you tell it. Have another leader ready to play the part of God's voice by reading the words marked in bold.)

It was night time and Samuel and Eli were both asleep in the Tabernacle, when suddenly Samuel was woken up by a voice calling his name.

Samuel, Samuel.

Samuel thought it must be Eli calling him, so he went to Eli

and asked what he wanted.

Eli had been asleep, but he woke up and was confused by what Samuel said. He hadn't called him. He told him he must have imagined it and to go back to bed, so Samuel did.

But, just as he was drifting off to sleep, the voice came again.

Samuel, Samuel.

"I definitely heard Eli call this time," he thought, so he went to see what Eli wanted. "What is it?" he asked Eli.

Eli woke up again and told Samuel "I didn't call you. Go back to bed." It must have been pretty annoying to keep getting woken up like that.

Samuel went back to bed. But just as he was drifting off to sleep the voice came again.

Samuel, Samuel.

Once again, he went to Eli to ask him what he wanted, and again Eli said that he hadn't called Samuel.

Then Eli realised what could be happening. Maybe it was God speaking to Samuel!

He told Samuel this and said to go back to bed, but if the voice spoke again to say "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening."

So Samuel went back to bed and sure enough the voice spoke again.

Samuel, Samuel.

So Samuel replied, "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening."

And God spoke to Samuel. He gave him a message to pass on to Eli. It was difficult message. God was saying that he wasn't happy with the way Eli was bringing up his sons. They were doing bad things and Eli wasn't stopping them.

In the morning Eli asked Samuel what God had said so Samuel told him. Eli realised that the words were true and that what Samuel was saying must have come from God.

That was the first time Samuel heard God speak to him, but he became really good at listening to God and as well as being a judge, he became known as a prophet- someone who hears God speak and passes his messages on to others.



REFLECT & RESPOND

▶ God Speaks Today

You will need: pictures (from additional document: God speaks today pictures)

Christians believe that God can still speak to people today. It's not usually in a voice we can hear in the way that Samuel did or the way that you can hear my voice just now, but there are ways God can speak to us.

That's important because we've talked a lot already about prayer and the idea of talking to God.

(You could ask the children if they can remember any of the different things we can pray about, e.g. thanking God, saying sorry, asking for help.)

Prayer is meant to be a conversation and that doesn't work very well when one person does all the talking!

So, how does God speak to us today?

(Go through the following points, using the pictures as visual aids.)

The main way is through the Bible. Christians believe it is God's Word, the way God

communicates with us. It teaches us about who God is so that we can know him and be in relationship with him, and it helps us to know how he wants us to live. Sometimes when we read the Bible it seems as if it is speaking right to us and to our situation. (If possible, give an example of a time when God has spoken to you through the Bible.)

Another way is through the world around us - that can show us things about God. We can look at the sea or at the stars in the sky or at a beautiful sunset and remember that God created it all. It can show us things about his strength and power or the way he cares for the world and for us.

Sometimes God can speak to us through another person when they say the words we really need to hear.

Sometimes it is when we pray and ask for God's help - maybe we have a difficult decision and when we pray he helps us to know what to do.

There are other ways as well, but those are some examples. It's not always easy to know when God is speaking or what he is saying, but if we learn to listen like Samuel we can get used to hearing God and learn to do it better.

We recognise the voices we hear a lot. If you hear a close friend or family member say a few words you know right away who it is, but that's because you've spent a lot of time with them and got to know them. As we get to know God more, we can get better at hearing his voice.

Prayer

*You will need:
speech bubbles printed
(from additional document:
Speech Bubbles) - optional*

Point out the prayer that Samuel used, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." Encourage the children to pray that if they want to and then give them a short time (30 seconds to a minute) to be quiet and to reflect on what they have heard.

If you have a little more time, you could lay out some speech bubbles (from additional document: Speech Bubbles) which contain a statement about how the children may be feeling, e.g. I'm worried, I'm sad, I'm happy. They have a Bible verse on the reverse, which relates to that feeling. You could let the children pick one that is relevant to them and let them take a moment to read the Bible verse and reflect on it.

Lead the children in prayer, asking God to help them to know him more and to learn to recognise his voice.



ADDITIONAL IDEAS

Daily Bible Reading

You will need: copies of Mark's Gospel, Bible reading plans from additional document: Through Mark's Gospel in 80 Days

Depending on the stage your group are at, this might be a good opportunity to encourage them that they can get to know God more and learn to recognise his voice by spending time reading the Bible each day. The leaflet in the additional document: Through Mark's Gospel in 80 Days gives a simple reading plan to work through the Gospel in short sections. You could offer this along with a copy of Mark's Gospel to those who are interested. Make sure you check that this is ok with the head teacher first!

Video

You will need: equipment to play video

This video from Saddleback Kids is a fun way to tell or recap Samuel's story in under two minutes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9albNjFjWk>